

TUNING IN

WHEN IT MATTERED MOST, THIS LOCAL SINGER-SONGWRITER DIDN'T MISS A BEAT

BY ANDREW SHANLEY

ROGER SALLOOM'S STORY IS A POWERFUL CAUTIONARY TALE. IT SAYS QUITE CLEARLY THAT IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE HAVING A HEART ATTACK, EVEN IF IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKELY, YOU NEED TO ACT QUICKLY.

There's a term in medicine called the "golden hour." It refers to the relatively brief period of time in which most trauma patients need to receive care in order to have a satisfactory outcome. In Roger Salloom's case, this period of time was only about ten minutes.

One day last May, the 63-year-old Northampton musician began to feel like something just wasn't right. It wasn't pain, not at first anyway. It was more a sense that the odd feeling in his chest was something he shouldn't ignore.

Mr. Salloom had no risk factors for cardiac disease. He had been under some extra stress, but his cholesterol levels and blood pressure always tested just fine. And yet he felt strongly that the way he was feeling wasn't fine at all.

So he and his wife quickly headed for their local community hospital, just five minutes away. Immediately on arrival at the hospital, Mr. Salloom began to lose consciousness. His heart stopped. He was in cardiac arrest, which in 95% of cases is fatal. His wife was told he probably wouldn't make it.

Once stabilized, Mr. Salloom was rushed to Baystate Medical Center where an angiogram showed his left anterior descending artery was blocked, a condition often referred to as the "widow-maker."

But Roger's wife was not going to be made a widow this day. Interventional cardiologist Dr. Marc Schweiger successfully unblocked the artery and implanted a stent to keep it open. Mr. Salloom remained in the hospital for 17 days, where he began to heal.



Today, Roger Salloom considers himself a lucky man.

"Baystate has the NASA space program for heart patients," Mr. Salloom says. "The nurses and doctors in the intensive care unit are great. And they really do care."

At Baystate, heart attack patients receive lifesaving angioplasty up to 25 minutes sooner than the national standard. "We are one of the best performing hospitals in Massachusetts and rank in the top 10% of hospitals nationwide by this critical measure," says Dr. J. Mark Peterman, director of the Baystate Regional Heart Attack Program.

By any measure, Roger Salloom considers himself a lucky man these days. His life has pretty much returned to normal. He takes brisk walks with his dogs, continues his longstanding practice of the martial arts, and plays the music that has earned him national recognition as a singer-songwriter. And because he received the necessary medical care in time, there's time now for many more songs to be sung.

Learn more about heart disease and treatments through the Baystate Heart & Vascular Program at baystatehealth.org/heart.

If you think you're
having a HEART ATTACK,
CALL 911.

